

# **TOWN OF TUNBRIGE**

## **2021 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – draft**

**Saturday, May 22, 2021, 10:00 am**

Meeting called to order at 10:10 am

Clerk Cilley lead the town in the Pledge of Allegiance.

117 voters present.

### **Art 1: To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.**

Cilley opens the floor to nominations for Moderator. Liz York was elected as Moderator.

York read information regarding Roberts Rules. York reads the Town Meeting Warning. George White moves to accept the Town Meeting Warning. Laura Ginsburg seconds. So moved.

### **Art 2: To hear the reports of Town Officers:**

**Delinquent Tax Collector:** Joe Paquin states that the pandemic has been taxing on all of us. There were two tax bills this year. Many people's mortgage companies have gotten confused, and they had a hard time tracking down the second payment. Paquin updates the remaining delinquent taxes as of May 22, 2021.

2017- \$285.57

2018- \$16,708.51

2019- \$26,290.82

2020- \$72,019.98

Paquin will be requesting approval from the Selectboard for tax sales this year.

Michael O'Donnell moves to accept. Jim Spaulding seconds. So moved.

**Auditors:** Anissa Morrison, Betsy Race, Linda Hoyt. Race states that the report is found on page 25. Race wants to call attention to updates in the report. Line total tax rate voted, usually an estimate at 0.0612 – will get an update. On page 23 Race states that the Recreation Orders subtotal did not add right and the correct figure is \$17,862.97. Peggy Sherlock points out that on page 23 there was an error. The library fund orders were repeated. The auditors take a moment to correct the error.

Moderator York decides since each report is listed in one article, we will hear other reports and accept all articles at the end.

**Library:** Theresa Fitzgerald, Anna Dechert, Mariah Lawrence. Fitzgerald gives a farewell to Jean Wolfe who has retired. A round of applause for Jean. Fitzgerald states the Library Report is found on page 37. Dechert introduces herself as a Library Trustee and the Chair of the Hiring Committee. Mariah Lawrence was hired as the new librarian. Lawrence gives report. She states

that it is a huge honor to become the librarian. She had to think creatively during this year at the library to get community involvement. She created and hosted more than 200 virtual activities. Closes by stating she is looking forward to meeting everyone.

**Listers:** Daniel “Rudi” Ruddell, Helen O’Donnell. Ruddell opens by stating they are down one lister. Jola O’Donnell stepped down a few months prior and they are looking to replace a lister. Ruddell mentions the reports can be found on page 28 & 29. Ruddell says this has been a year of tremendous change. There was a 38% increase in sales in the state. For the last few years sales were stagnant and this was not the case now. Properties are moving quickly. There are 212 properties in current use in Tunbridge with a few more enrollments processing which will add to that number. Tunbridge has more properties in Current Use than any other town in the state. Ruddell thanks Paul for all his work in the Current Use program. Ruddell discusses remote work and economic change and that we should anticipate some of these changes to stay. Ruddell goes on to say that the state will be changing their programs in the next few years. Ruddell opens the floor to questions or comments. Betsy Race asks about the lister position and what that entails. Ruddell answers that they will be electing two people today. One for a three-year term and one to fill the remaining one-year term J. O’Donnell vacated. The listers assess properties on a similar basis so that property owners’ taxes stay fair. They work on maps, taxes, homesteads, current use, data entry, topography, and a real estate background would be helpful but not required as there is extensive training opportunities. An unknown voter asked how many hours per week? Ruddell explains that the budget is set for 11 hours/week per each lister. They hold two office days. Rob Howe asks if Ruddell thinks we will be subjected to a reappraisal. Ruddell explains that we get that threshold from the state. If we drop below 85% or above \_\_\_\_% then we would be forced to reappraise. The last town wide appraisal was \_\_\_\_\_. The listers do manual maintenance of the properties to keep them up to date. To summarize Ruddell states that the State has not mandated one and they do not have any reappraisal scheduled.

**Cemetery Commission:** Baxter Doty, Dennis Cilley. Doty thanks the townspeople who mows the cemeteries and states that they do a great job. He discusses that we have a five-year contract with the mowing company and that we have one more year with them.

**Emergency Services Committee:** Selectboard states they are no longer a committee.

**Planning Commission:** Laura Ginsberg. Ginsberg states the report is found on page 50. Ginsberg dives in by saying the commission has passed the Hazard Mitigation Plan to the Selectboard which was passed, it was then given to FEMA and it has passed there as well. It is now accepted and in place. The purpose of this Plan is if another Irene happens or an ice jam, etc happens, we now get a lot more money by the State. Ginsberg moves on to discuss the Town Plan. This plan will start in 2024 and will be readapted in 2025. The Town Plan provides recommendations and desires of how the town should operate. Act 248 and Act \_\_\_\_ is where the Town Plan can legally come into play. Besides that it is more of a guideline on where we can see the town going. Subdivision, energy use etc are things that can be found in the town plan. The Town Plan update was brought to the Selectboard in January. The Selectboard has one year to adopt it and will hold a public discussion and open meeting before adopting it. For those interested in reading the 100+ page document it can be found on the Town Website. The

Planning Commission was also brought forth to help with the Legal Trails issue and to help with a policy recommendation. The Planning Commission has had four meetings with town input. They determined legal trails are an issue that needs its own committee. A committee was formed in April and they are working. Anne Linehan chairs this committee. The Trails Committee was broken into sub committees where they work on different aspects because the Trails is a big issue. The Planning Commission is also looking into Class 4 roads. Jerilyn Zarogian raises the question if there is a map regarding the trails. Ginsberg states that it is on the Planning Commission website. Todd Tyson asks about the upcoming dates. Ginsberg lets the crowd know that the Trails Committee meet every other week. July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the Trails Committee owes the Planning Commission a report. Ginsberg states that right now all the trails are closed. The Trails will reopen for use to walking as of May 31<sup>st</sup>. You can walk your bike, yourself or your horse.

**Recreation:** Kathy Galluzzo. Galluzzo states that the pool is open, the volleyball court is all set and there is now more parking available. Luke Barnaby and Jeremiah Caron are new members. Amy Bogardus, Kathy Galluzzo and Matt Galluzzo are also on the committee. The report is found on page 32-33.

**Selectboard:** Gary Mullen, Mike McPhetres, John O'Brien. O'Brien tells the crowd that the report is on page 7. He recognizes folks who are here in the crowd and how they all do something for Tunbridge. O'Brien goes on to say that it has been a strange year. The Selectboard oversees two budgets: the General Fund and the Highway Budget. The Selectboard tries to do the most with the least amount of money. He states the three board members are "pretty darn frugal." O'Brien states that the State and Federal Governments have helped a lot with expenses in 2020. He recalls how during plowing season when COVID was at an all time high they were all worried about the Highway crew getting sick, but thankfully they all stayed healthy. They will be giving the road crew a well deserved raise this year. O'Brien states that if you are unhappy with your roads to call the Selectboard, call the garage or drive a dirt road in another town and you will love your roads. O'Brien states that we purchased a new grader and truck and opens the floor for questions. Chris Tuttle asks if we can get the mowers out now to stop the chervil. O'Brien says they will add it to the agenda. Michael Sacca asks if the Selectboard can recommend to the State early mowing since they manage VT RTE 110. O'Brien states he will find out more. Betsy Guiyser asks if there can be a place at the Transfer Station to dump invasive species. An unknown voter states it's extremely hard to kill it. Tuttle continues by stating that even after he ripped it out it still goes to seed so we must be careful with it. Anissa Morrison asks if the town has thought about what we will be doing with the COVID funding. We could be getting up to \$200,000 from the state. O'Brien states there are lots of restrictions but would be happy to have a town wide discussion. Matthew Lerch stands up and brings up an issue on Gilley road regarding a septic and asks how the town assess this? O'Brien states the Orange County Sherriff and Health Officer have been up there in regards to that situation and that sometimes legally and statutorily we are in a bind to resolve an issue. O'Brien asks Lerch to attend a Selectboard meeting to discuss the issues and ideas to solve them. Sylvie Desautels brings up an issue with people dumping trash and tires on Falls Hills Road and wants the community to be aware of this so that they can keep their eyes open.

**Treasurer:** Rebecca Hoyt. Hoyt opens by saying the report is on page 18. She states that Tunbridge is not normally a two-bill town, so it has been hard with mortgage companies. She apologizes for it being such a hard year. She states now that once she is fully vaccinated her hours will be steadier.

**Trustees of Public Funds:** Matt Frost, Rob Howe, Liz York. Frost states the reports are on page 34-35. Frost says there is not much to report on in terms of activity. They have switched to Edward Jones. The fee structure here is a bit different so they got hit with a lot of upfront fees. They are investing in a lot of different things as required by statute. Henry Swayze asks if we can decarbonize and not invest in oil. Frost states we aren't fully invested in anything specific and that we need to maximize return and are held to specific regulations regarding what they can and can't invest in. Peggy Sherlock asks if we have the option to invest in Fidelity or something with a lower price option. Frost states that they looked at many different options but not that many fit the bill for a municipality. Chris Tuttle asks if he would be interested in seeing the portfolio. Frost says he can scan a copy and that it is in the town office and in the meeting minutes. Tuttle asks why there are limits. Frost states that there are specific limits on the funds because they are public funds and not personal funds. Only the people who are on the board can manage the funds, but they cannot make personal decisions regarding the funds. Sylvie Desautels asks if the townspeople are objecting to specific investments why can't we look into more local options. Frost explains that these companies are focused on investing for municipalities. He states if there was overwhelming town support for other companies they would look into it. Frost reiterates that it is the fiduciary duty of the trustees to maximize the return for the town. An unknown voter asks if we could vote now to move towards a carbon zero investment. Moderator York says that it could be brought up in Other Business.

York asks the Auditors if they have the corrected number. Auditors state that the number was okay, but they had duplicated the language, so it was a printing error not a mathematical error.

Rob Howe makes a motion to accept the reports. Kathy Galluzzo seconds. So moved.

**Art. 3: Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on Monday, November 1, 2021, by delivery to the town hall postmarked on or before that date, with delinquent taxes having an interest charge of 1% per month or fraction thereof for the first 3 months and then 1.5% each month pursuant 32 V.S.A. § 5136, to thereafter and an 8% penalty charged against them from the due date?**

Peggy Sherlock moves to accept. Ben Tucker seconds. So moved.

**Art. 4: Shall the voters authorize Town Treasurer, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4791 to collect current taxes?**

Jim Spauling moves to accept. Helen O'Donnell seconds. So moved.

**Art. 5: Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$611,503.51 of which \$356,903.51 shall be raised by taxes.**

Kay Jorgensen moves to accept. Betsy Race seconds. So moved.

**Art. 6: Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditures of \$961,140.00 of which \$825,790.00 shall be raised by taxes?**

Joe Paquin moves to accept. Brenda Field seconds. So moved.

**Art. 7: Shall the town vote to appropriate \$41,900.00 to support the Tunbridge Volunteer Fire Department Inc.?**

Kathy Galluzzo moves to accept. George White seconds. So moved.

**Art. 8: Shall the town appropriate \$16,326.00 to support the following social services pursuant to 24 V.S.C ~ 2691.**

**Central Vermont Adult Basic Education \$1200**

**Central Vermont Council on Aging \$500**

**Chelsea Area Senior Center \$1500**

**Clara Martin Center \$2019**

**Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation \$665**

**Green Up Vermont \$100**

**Public Health Council of the Upper Valley \$662**

**Safeline \$750**

**Tri Valley Transport (Formerly Stagecoach) \$1600**

**The Art Bus \$800**

**The White River Partnership \$250**

**Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired \$150**

**Vermont Family Network \$250**

**Vermont Center for Independent Living \$15**

**Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force \$100**

**Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH \$2780**

**Orange County Parent Child Center \$1000**

**Orange County Restorative Justice Center \$350**

**Orange County Special Investigation Unit \$1500**

Rob Howe moves, Laura Ginsberg seconds. Chris Wood asks what Orange County Special Investigation Unit is? An unknown voter stands up and says it's the investigation unit for DCF and is part of the OCSD. Kathi Terami states they have done investigation for child predators online and intervene with those types of cases. John O'Brien points out that we used to require a person from each business to be present at Town Meeting, but now just a report is required. Move to vote. So moved.

Moderator York points out there was a misnumbering of the Articles. York makes a motion to change the second Article 8 to Article 9 and Article 9 to Article 10. Henry Swayze moves.

Norman Maxham seconds. So moved.

**Art. 9: To elect All Town Officers as required by law.**

**Selectboard for the Term of 3 years.** Victoria Paquin nominates John O'Brien. Jim Spauling seconds. So moved.

**Town Clerk to finish the term (until town meeting 2022).** Helen O'Donnell nominates Mariah Cilley. Lauren Mabie seconds. So moved.

**Lister for a term of 3 years.** Helen O'Donnell nominates Daniel "Rudi" Ruddell. Henry Swayze seconds. So moved.

**Lister for a term of 1 year.** Ben Tucker nominates Darlene Miller. Betsy Race seconds. So moved.

**Auditor for a term of 3 years.** Anissa Morrison nominates Betsy Race. Kathy Galluzzo seconds. So moved.

**Cemetery Commission for a term of 2 years.** Baxter Doty nominates Dennis Cilley. David Race seconds. So moved.

**Cemetery Commission for a term of 3 years.** Darlene Miller nominates Ben Tucker. Betsy Race seconds. So moved.

**Trustee of Public Funds for a term of 3 years.** Matt Frost nominates Liz York. Jen Hayslett seconds. So moved.

**Library Trustee for a term of 3 years.** Marsha Higgins nominates Anna Dechart. Mariah Lawrence seconds. So moved.

**Library Trustee for a term of 2 years.** Marsha Higgins nominates Michael Crauthamer. Mark Bomalaski seconds. So moved.

**Library Trustee for a term of 1 year.** Marsha Higgins nominates Theresa Fitzgerald. Mariah Lawrence seconds. So moved.

**Library Trustee for a term of 1 year.** Marsha Higgins nominates Catherine Freese. Theresa Fitzgerald seconds. So moved.

**Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a term of 1 year.** Becky Hoyt nominates Joe Paquin. Jim Spaulding seconds. So moved.

**First Constable for a term of 1 year.** Becky Hoyt nominates Bruce Jones. Brenda Field seconds. So moved.

**Second Constable for a term of 1 year.** Janet Wells nominates Katherine Adams. Becky Hoyt seconds. So moved.

#### **Art. 10. Other Business.**

Mariah Lawrence acknowledges how lucky we are to be in Sue Barnaby's presence and thanked everyone who donated in honor. A moment of silence was held for Sue.

Sylvie Desautels moves to have a straw poll urging the Trustees of Public Funds to move towards a carbon neutral investment. Henry Swayze makes a motion to move away from banking institutions that invest in oil. Todd Tyson seconds Sylvie. Chris Tuttle seconds Henry Swayze's motion.

Mike McCullough stands up and adds that he doesn't think Town Meeting is the place for this since there is not a majority of Tunbridge here so it wouldn't represent the community as a whole.

Chris Tuttle stands in support of the straw vote but also states that he doesn't think this is the time or place. He suggests to help the board because they are volunteers and to help find these

banks and join the trustee meetings with your findings. Chris Wood states that this is just sending a simple message to the trustees with no pressure or requirement.

Nancy Howe states that the most appropriate way to have this issue covered is to have it added to the agenda for Town Meeting and not drop it on the end as such.

Ben Tucker reminds folks that the Green New Deal is not the answer to everything. He discusses his views on solar energy.

John O'Brien asks if we can table a motion. Moderator York states that if we table a motion it means we have to return to it at another time with the same amount of voters and people present, which means we would have to have another Town Meeting at a future date, so that tabling a motion would not be the correct thing to do at this point.

Jim Spaulding makes a motion to move the second motion. All in favor 25. All Opposed 33. So moved.

Voting on the original motion is 24 in favor. 22 opposed. Motion carries to urge trustees to look into other investments that are carbon neutral.

Becky Hoyt reminds everyone that they can now purchase dump tickets online. Helen O'Donnell asks if the payment is the same way as it is for tax season. Hoyt states that it is different than tax season because of the fee structure, but the fee is very upfront and you can see how much the ticket will cost you when you check out. No hidden fees.

Kathy Galluzzo wants to add that Seth Johnson is also on the Recreation Committee. She also reminds townsfolk that at following Town Meeting there will a FBUD informational meeting.

Matthew Lerch stands to ask how many times people will be made to vote on a school budget again. York tells Lerch that is a question to be brought up at the informational meeting.

Kathi Terami informs the voters that there is an open board position on the CVSWMD which has been empty for 12 years.

Kay Jorgensen reminds everyone there is a book sale at the library.

Todd Tyson states the Energy Committee is actively seeking folks and that it is currently not an active committee.

Henry Swayze discusses EC Fiber and that is now on every road in Tunbridge. They are still working on back logs to get the houses hooked up. He reminds folks if they are interested but do not think they will be able to afford EC Fiber to write it on the clipboard he has and he will take it to the board.

Betsy Guiyser wants to hear from our State Representative.

John O'Brien states that they just adjourned Friday 5/21/2021 and set a billion dollar budget. He said this past year has been filled with lots of zoom meetings. They worked on different issues such as where raw milk can be sold, animal cruelty etc. O'Brien is part of the dairy pricing taskforce. There are 66 taskforces in the VT House of Representatives. He wants to remind folks

to “Do like Sue” or “Be like Sue B” and that there are a lot of open positions in the town that are vacant. Come to the Selectboard and volunteer.

Tunbridge Memorial Day will be held July 5<sup>th</sup> 2021 at the Fairgrounds.

Baxter Doty thanks Euclid Farnham for all he has done.

Michael O’Donnell makes a motion to adjourn. Seconded by an unknown voter. So moved.

Meeting adjourned at 12:50pm.